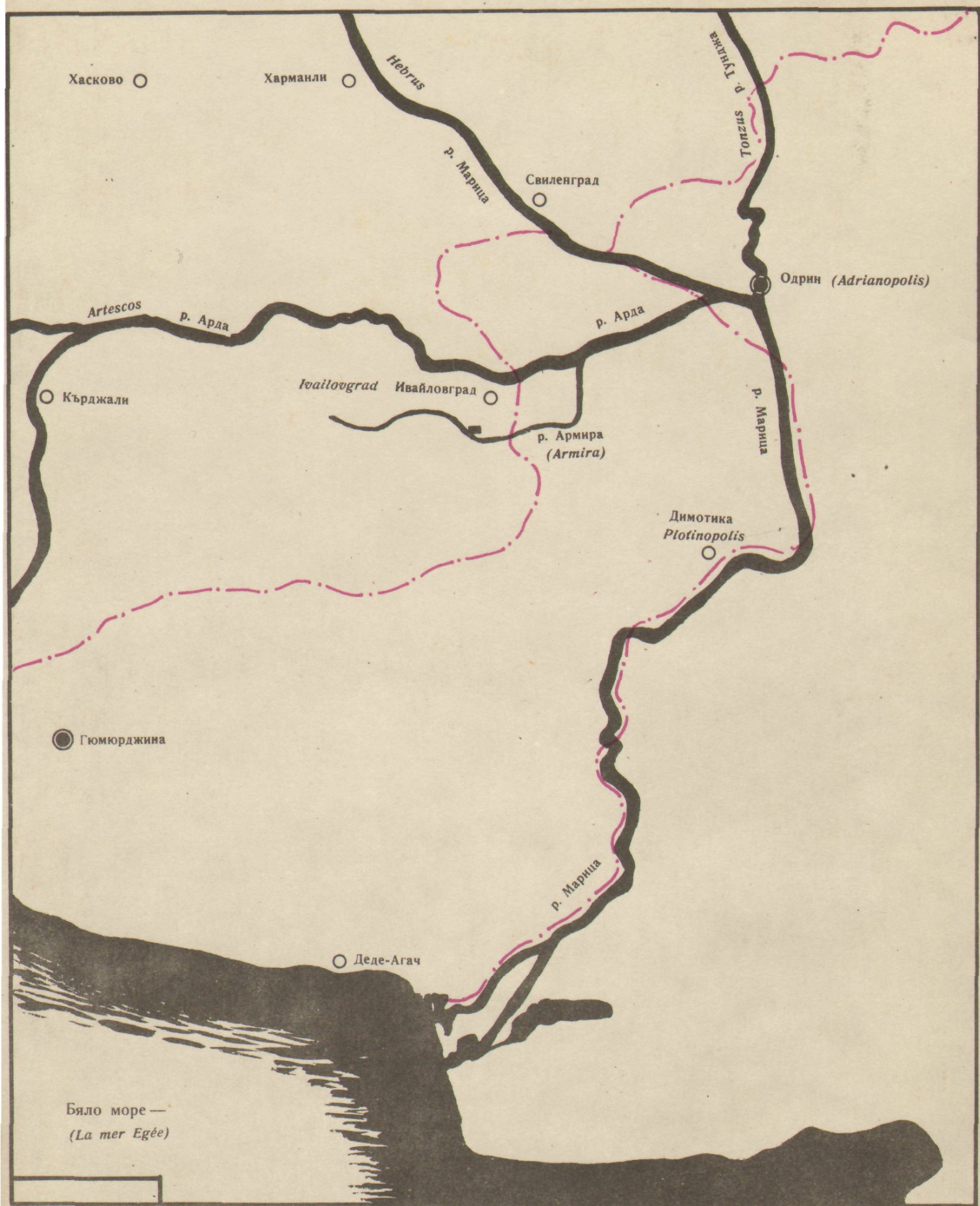


РУМСКАТА ВУЛА
ПРИ ЦВАЙЛОВГРАД
СТЕННА ДЕКОРАЦИЯ

LA VILLA ROMAINE
PRES D'JVAILOVGRAD
INCRUSTATIONS
MURALES EN MARBRE





Untitled

ROMAN VILLA WITH MARBLE INCRUSTATIONS AT IVAYLOVGRAD

The villa is located 4 km south of Ivaylovgrad and 40 km southeast of Edirne (ancient Adrianople). Located on one of the final slopes of the Eastern Rhodopes, which descends to Armira River, a tributary of the Arda, this region in pre-Roman era was part of a large Thracian state of Odrisses and in the Roman Empire belonged to the territory of Adrianople.

The premises were discovered in 1964 when construction of a dam had began. It occupies 2200 m², and is built of hewn stone, associated with white mortar. There are many memorial halls, large peristyle (colonnaded patio), with a deep impluvium (pool) and a large backyard. It was built at the beginning of II century AD and underwent three main periods of construction. Soon after the primary structure, the building has undergone some reconstruction and later was extended, having been upgraded with premises on the eastern side.

Preserved are floor mosaics from peristyle and many of the premises which pose the greatest discovery (250 m²) of ancient mosaics found in our country. The floors of some rooms lie on columns of clay pipes or stone - a device for heating (hypocaust) and avoid moisture. The villa was the center of large land tenure and served as a home of its owners. Next to it on an area of 15 acres is located a large complex of farm buildings.

The villa was looted and burned during the Gothic devastation in 376-378 AD.

Villa Armira provide exceptional case study of an interesting feature in Roman architecture, the marble inlay. Cut into thin marble slabs those were attached to the walls with bronze or iron hooks and a thick layer of mortar. In Latin the marble slabs were called "crust" and hence the technique received the name "incrustatio marmorea". This was the most expensive and shiny wall decoration of large public buildings and facilities representative of the wealthy homes in the Roman era. Its use is attested throughout the ancient world, but the findings generally offer few and fragmented artifacts. In many cases, only holes in the walls of the hooks are an indication of missing lining.

During the excavation of the marble wall decoration of the

Untitled

villa were dug out some 2750 pieces of fragments and whole items. Some had fallen from the walls in the places they have stood. This helped to restore the full form of cladding, which covers the four walls of the peri-style. It was an imitation of the colonnade. At the bottom of the mosaics were driven flat caps, over them were placed profile caps. Next are the pilastri alternating with panels. Each pilaster consists of base, middle and capital. Between bases were smooth tiles, between secondary parts - items ornamented panels, and between capitols - small ornamental panels. Over the ornate pilasters passed a frieze, and above it are the next big smooth slabs. Up to the ending was a trim and smooth profile cornice. The height of the walls so decorated was 3.50 m. Similar paneling had also room № 1.

Capitols are from crafted sculpture, pilasters and cornices are channeled, plinths, bases, and some frames are profile. The ornaments of the frieze and panels are cut and on many of them there are traces of red paint. The large panels are decorated with ivy, on the edges with twigs, dolphins, meanders, etc; small panels are filled with geometric shapes and the frieze - with jelly and geometric shapes.

Of particular interest are several panels on which an architectural composition occurs - motif on frescoes II and IV from the Pompeii style, and in this particular villa for the first time on marble panels.

Capitols from the villa are the largest trove of facing heads. Their number is 26 and between them not even two are duplicate. Most have in the middle of abaca an image - an eagle, the head of Medusa, a maenad, a woman, satyr, snail, lizard, dolphin, etc.

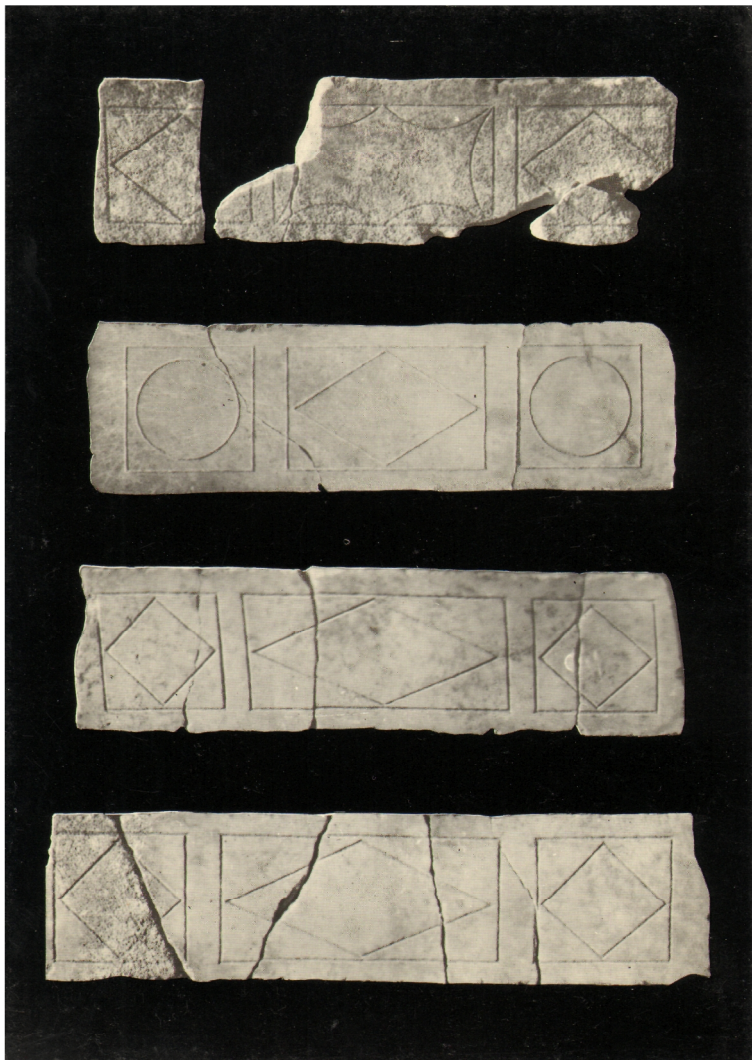
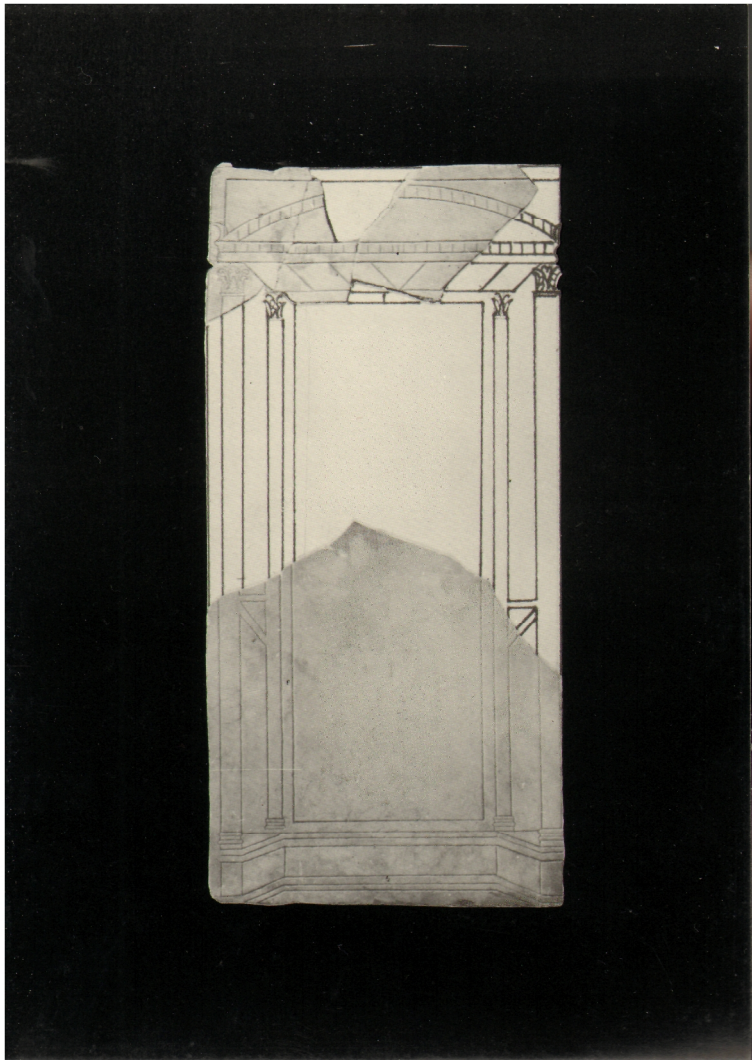
In the style of their acanthus leaf capitols there are very precise analogies with capitols of buildings from the time of Hadrian (117-138) and Antoninus Pius (138-161) from Herculaneum-Perint on the Marmara Sea, and Aphrodisias, Ephesus and Pergamum in Asia Minor. They help to determine the time when the peri-style was placed in room № 1 - second quarter of II century AD. The trim fillers were not local craftsmen - they came from the East. The presence of marble quarries, which are located 5 km west of the villa, had enabled to establish nearby a masonry sculpture studio.

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Ancient authors and modern researchers agree that homeland of marble inlay is Asia Minor, where it began around the middle of IV century BC to replace the expensive construction technique of quadrangle marble blocks. The earliest monument of which we have information that had such a decoration, is the palace of Mausolus (377-353 BC) at Halicarnassus. From the East this technique spread to Greece and thence penetrates into Rome. In Rome, the first house lined with marble belonged to Mamura who was from equestrian community and was contemporary of Caesar (100-44 BC).

Coatings occur in two main types, non-ornamental and ornamental. In Herculaneum and Ostia were preserved linings of colored and white marble, without ornaments. Ornamental facings were previously known only from drawings by Renaissance artists. Recently in Ostia was found a public building unfinished with decorated lining from the IV century AD. Preserved are also some fragments of decorated paneling, from the IV century AD, at a public building in Tomi (Constanta). Cladding of the house in Ivaylovgrad is the only ornamented paneling on the vast territory of the Roman Empire, which is so well preserved and from which we know the full proto-type of the floor-to-ceiling technique.

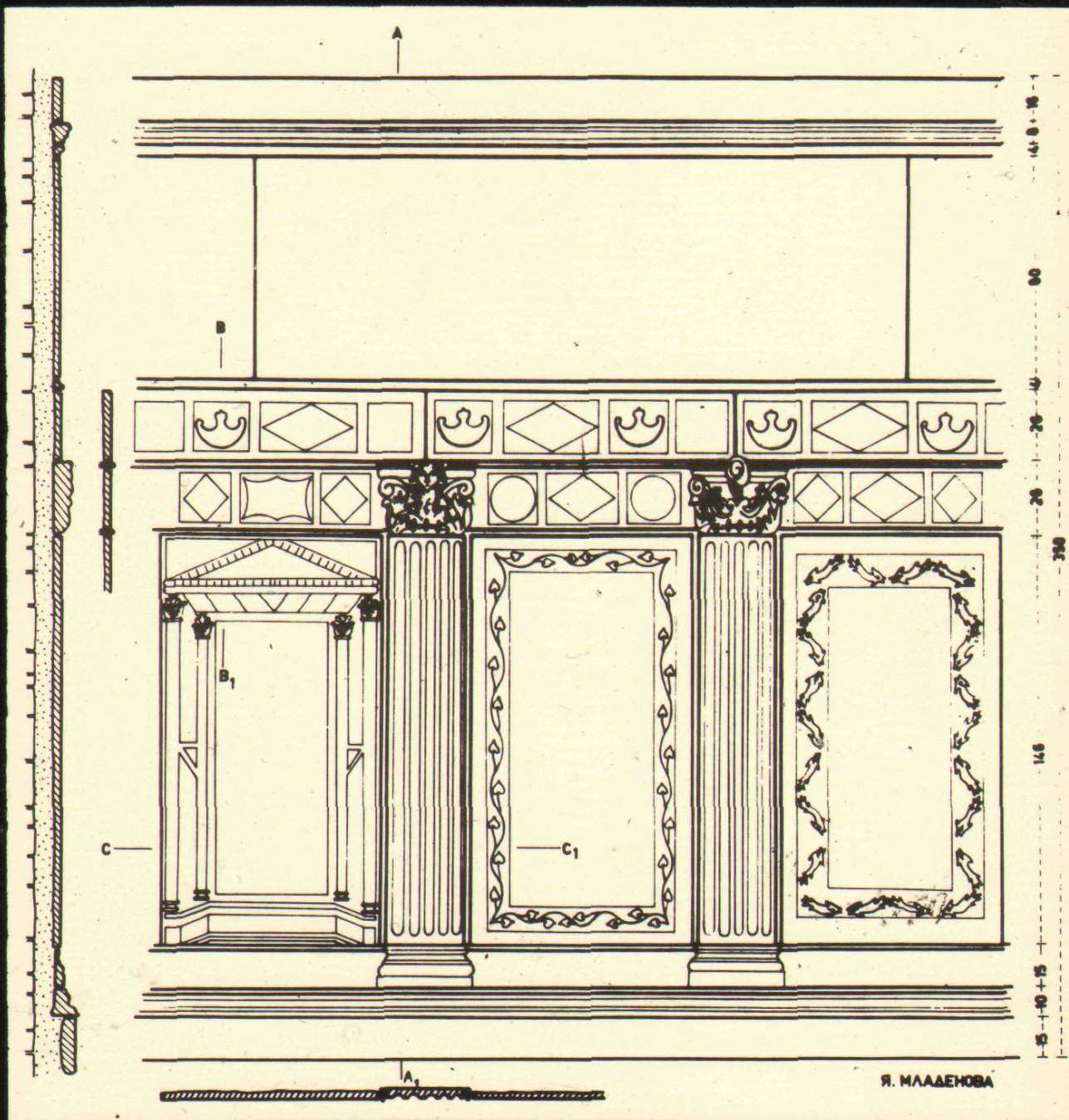
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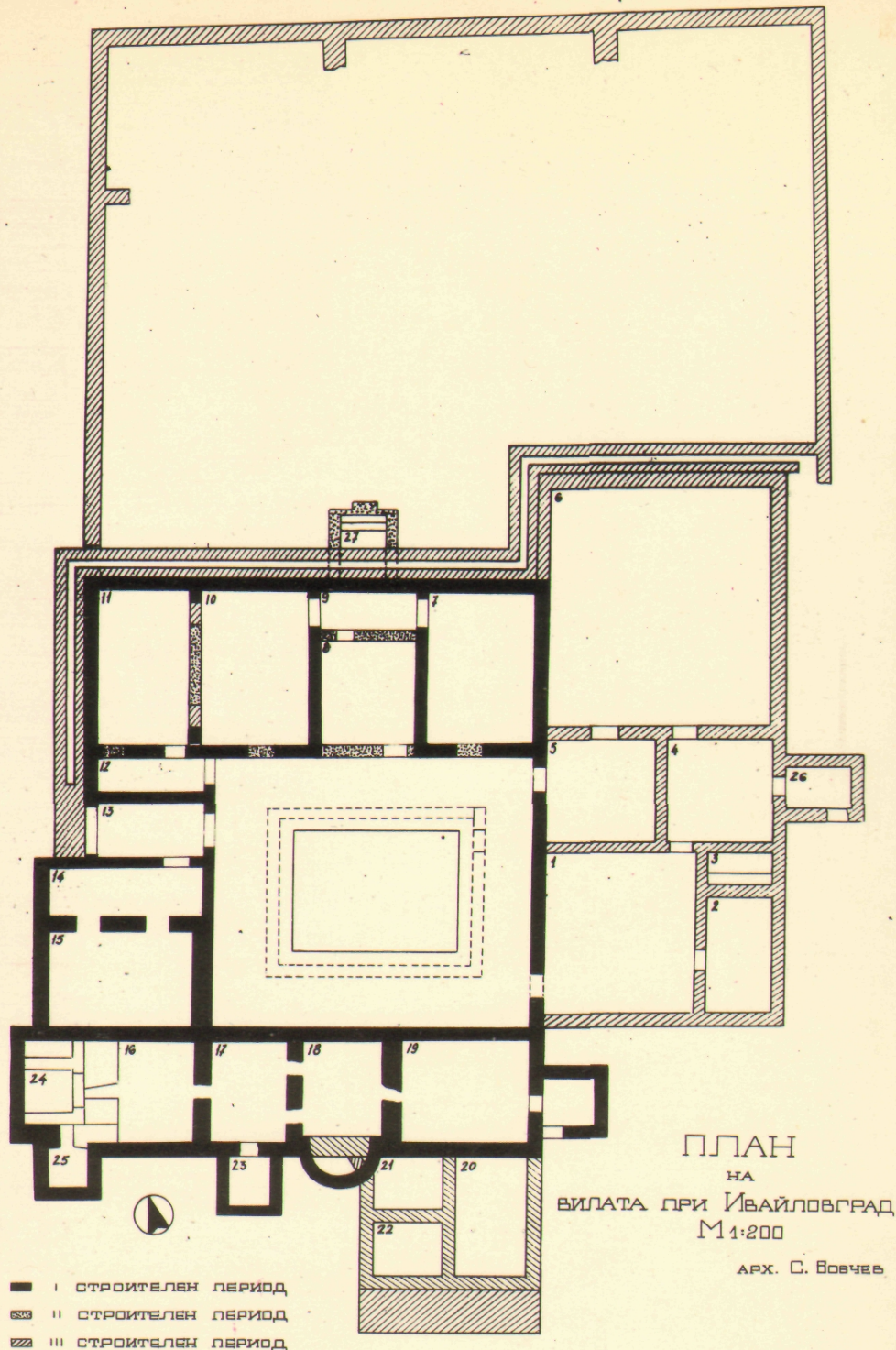












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